



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF TRAINEE TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO TEACHING PRACTICUM: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The research questions of the present study are related to (1) a difference between trainee teachers and supervisors in understanding the skills of micro-teaching highlighted in a typical teaching practicum and (2) how can the difference be reduced. The first question has been addressed based on the findings of the present case study and the second question has been addressed through a conceptual analysis based on the findings of a previous case study by Mitra (2019) and another by Sosibo (2014). The methodology adopted is qualitative in nature supported by conceptual analysis. Data have been collected relating to five identified skills for micro-teaching with the help of an open-ended questionnaire and unstructured interviews. The results of the present case study showed that the trainees had distinct difficulties in understanding the instructions of the supervisors. The final proposals include (1) the introduction of self-evaluation by the trainees as proposed by Sosibo (2014) on one side and (2) the introduction of psychology in the school curriculum along with its popularization as proposed by Mitra (2019) on the other. A significant number of the responding trainees of the present case study opined in favour of collaboration and interaction between the trainees and the supervisors along with the use of the concept attainment model. However, the opinions are subject to verification.

KEYWORDS: Trainee teachers' ideas about teaching with which they enter; Supervisor's instructions on teaching practicum; Difference between trainee teachers and supervisors relating to teaching practicum

1. INTRODUCTION

The research originated from the problem felt at the time of giving instructions relating to the teaching practicum programme designed for the trainee teachers. It appeared to the author that on a significant number of occasions there were disagreements between the trainee teachers and supervisors of the teaching practicum program. In a paper depicting a thorough study by Sosibo (2013) a few disagreements were reported that were more administrative. Mitra and Roy (2021) conceptually analysed the situation and proposed that there might be another dimension of the difference between the trainee teachers and the supervisors. According to them, the trainee teachers enter the training programme with some previous understanding of teaching which may differ from the instructions coming from the supervisors. Such a state of mismatch may result in a conflict and the trainees may fall into a state of moratorium (Erikson, 1968). In the present paper, the authors have reported the results of a simple case study that peeps into this moratorium. In that connection, the authors have proposed a curricular reform at the school level which may bring changes in the previous understanding of the trainees relating to teaching and lead to easy recovery from the moratorium stage and quicker attainment of the level of achievement (Erikson, 1968).

2. RATIONALE, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Rationale: The need for education today does not require it to be advertised any further. Even a household help tries to send his/her child to a good school. But, it appears that people are more interested in getting certificates and getting good marks in examinations. The common perception is that a certificate from a good school or getting good marks can ensure a good job. This worked well when the formal education system started its journey. Unfortunately, in the long run, this demand resulted in a class of producers who started ensuring admission to good schools/programmes and good marks through mechanical activities like specialized coaching. Finally, this turned into malpractices like selling certificates or illegally providing questions and answers to the students before the commencement of examinations. For several reasons, the efforts of the regulatory bodies are failing to control the quality of education. But, nature takes her course of action and flows like water following the natural laws. After the advent of the pandemic due to COVID-19, traditional and secured job opportunities have come down. Experts are suggesting that one has to be innovative and has to be able to learn continuously. The so-called certificate from a renowned institution or getting good marks in an examination is not going to ensure an opportunity for a job. In the present scenario, job opportunities are also changing fast. So, one has to be ready to switch over from one job to another at any point in time. This is possible only when one learns new skills, acquires new experiences and get prepared for a new job even when she or he is doing a job and making some earnings. This would be able to control the quality of education. There should be better compatibility between demand and supply. At the stage of teaching practicum, this should be between the demand of the trainee teachers and the supply from the supervisors. Demand from the side of trainee teachers includes the social need and the supply from the side of the supervisors represents the knowledge base developed by researchers. Compatibility between

these two may help trainee teachers to become innovative teachers who can perform better in raising their students as innovative learners. This forms the rationale of the study.

Research questions:

1. Do the trainees feel difficulty and fall into moratorium with the difference between their previous understanding and the instructions of the supervisors, specifically while learning the five skills of micro-teaching?
2. How can the period of moratorium be reduced so that the trainee teachers can arrive at the stage of achievement faster?

Operational definitions:

- Teaching Practicum: It is the most important part of a teacher education programme. It involves real classroom teaching as a portion of the school internship and mock teaching in a simulated environment (e.g. in micro-teaching).
- Micro-teaching: It is an objective-based mock teaching where specific skills are identified and practised in a simulated environment.
- Moratoriums: These represent people who are struggling for identity and facing conflicts between the ideas imposed by others and the ideas already adapted in the self. Erikson (1968) coined the phrase "psychosocial moratorium" to describe such a state for adolescents who may undergo a delay in achieving balanced adulthood.
- Stage of achievement: It is the state when one can make ideas coming from outside and ideas already in the self-compatible. The concept also was introduced by Erikson to describe an adolescent coming out of moratorium and capable of experiencing a self-identity.

3. METHODOLOGY

Relating to Research Question 1:

Case study approach has been adopted. Responses were collected based upon an open-ended questionnaire and unstructured discussions.

Relating to Research Question 2:

Conceptual analysis based on a previous case study (Mitra, 2019) has been adopted. In addition, the approach indicated by Sosibo (2014) has been used for formulating the proposal presented here.

4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population: Existing B.Ed. Trainees (third semester) of Siliguri B.Ed. College who have just learned about the details of micro-teaching in the second semester and now they are preparing for school internships.

The sample: It is a purposive one chosen for convenience. Seventeen trainees from the social science group have been included in the sample. Out of the seventeen trainee teachers, thirteen responded systematically. Thus, finally, the sample consisted of thirteen trainees.

5. FINDINGS

Relating to research question 1:

The trainee teachers unanimously reported that the B.Ed. programme was useful to them. However, this does not carry any significant information. Because, the trainees are in the system of B.Ed. Program and there is a possibility that they did not want to be at risk by making any comment against the system.

However, when they were asked to arrange five skills according to difficulty level (in terms of difficulty in understanding the instructions) some interesting feedbacks were available. Five skills are included in the B.Ed. curriculum. Those are: *Introducing the lesson, Questioning, Use of teaching aids, Reinforcement and Illustration*. Interestingly, most of the trainees kept *Introducing the lesson and Illustration* in the most difficult category. (In the opinion of the author, *Introducing the lesson and Illustration* have maximum involvement of experiences.)

The author interprets this to be due to the difference between the trainee students' experiences and the requirement of the learning situation as instructed by the supervisor (which is influenced by the experiences of the supervisor). The supervisor tries to give the instructions based on their own experiences. The trainee teachers' experiences differ from those and they face difficulty in comprehending the instructions of the supervisor.

Finally, when asked about how the difficulty can be overcome, the answers came as stated below. On the surface there are variations. But, on a closer look, one can identify three components: The process of instruction should be through more interactive (among all including the supervisor as a participant) practices, based upon concept attainment approach and with the use of collaboration. This includes training relating to teaching skills as well.

The responses of the trainee teachers mentioned above are as follows.

- *There should be an interactive class where the viewpoint of both sides are put and tried to understand them and reach a solution.*
- *There should be collaboration from both sides (trainee and supervisor) like planning, debating, problem-solving, inquiring together, helping each other to overcome weaknesses etc.*
- *There should be a free environment to put queries, opinions, ideas and views from both sides.*
- *There should be proper interaction and communication regarding each other's views.*
- *There should be an equal contribution from both sides to find the solution to differences in views and ideas.*
- *There should be proper interaction and collaboration with each and every one.*
- *There should be the repetition of the demonstration of skills again and again in a very simple and understandable way, because these skills develop our teaching method and techniques which we can apply in any classroom situation.*
- *There should be more classes on these 5 skills of teaching, because it is important in classroom teaching and more practice helps us to enhance our skill.*
- *Precise examples from the locality (environment) should be there.*
- *There should be more usage of PPT and TLM.*
- *There should be classes regarding teaching skills like the use of teaching aids.*
- *There should be the use of discussion methods.*
- *There should be the use of social simulation models, role-playing models, and the concept attainment model; during the teaching of skills there could be more examples or more demonstrations.*

(The language of the responses of the trainees has been edited based on the discussions with them. However, care has been taken to see that the reporting of their views is not distorted.)

Relating to research question 2:

In the work of Mitra (2019) awareness and attitude of students and guardians towards psychological information were studied using unstructured interviews. It was found that most of the students were unaware of Psychology as a discipline and the rest had vague ideas about it. The guardians were aware of the discipline of Psychology, apparently deeply interested in the same, and at the same time having a poor understanding of psychological information. In that paper, it was also commented that the psychology had no place in general school education. It was also opined that had it been in the curriculum, the children would have been better informed about psychology and at the same time the parents would have been better aware of the same. The study of Sosibo (2014) revealed that trainee teachers expressed discontentment over the variations in the instructions of the teacher educators on the same teaching component, absence of the consideration of the differences of resources of different institutions offering scope for teaching practice and intricate requirements of different skills of teaching as advocated by the supervisors. Sosibo (2013) proposed self-evaluation by the trainees as a measure for overcoming the barrier. The work claimed that initially, the mismatch between the evaluation by the trainees and the same by the instructors was wide which gradually diminished.

6. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

In the context of the present work (research question 2) it may be stated that

- Psychological knowledge has the most important role in the basic structure of the teaching practicum.
- On the other hand, as observed by Mitra (2019), the social environment involving students and guardians have a poor understanding of psychology.
- It is proposed here that this lacking leads to the difference between the trainee teachers and the supervisors. The poor awareness of psychology shapes the understanding of the trainees with which they enter the training programme quite different from the instructions of the supervisors which are psychology rich. This may lead to an enhanced stage of moratorium where a trainee teacher struggles to come out of the conflicting situation and to achieve an independent identity as a teacher.

For achieving this goal, the proposals are as follows.

- i) Self-evaluation by the trainee teachers as proposed by Sosibo (2014) may be introduced. Along with that, as indicated by the trainee teachers relating to research question number 1, collaboration, interaction and use of concept attainment model may reduce the difference. In all these options both the trainee teacher and the supervisor strive to reach each other. This action is expected to lead to immediate results.
- ii) However, this measure may be the most effective only when another long-term measure is taken in compliance with research question number 2. Here, the proposal of Mitra (2019) may be of use. It was for the inclusion of psychology in the school curriculum and the popularization of experimentally easy and verifiable psychological knowledge. With this it is expected that the ideas of the trainee teachers relating to teaching which they already have will be much closer to what is instructed by the supervisor.

7. CONCLUSION

The paper develops on the assumption that trainee teachers may fail to understand the instructions of the supervisor due to the differences between whatever ideas they already carry and the new ideas that are being imposed upon them. This has been supported here by the findings of a case study involving seventeen trainees in the third semester of a B.Ed. programme. From the interpretations of these findings of the present case study and those of a previous case study conducted by Mitra (2019), it has been proposed here that, this difference leaves the trainee teachers in the stage of moratorium much like that proposed by Erikson while describing the unstable stage of adolescence. It has also been proposed that, specifically, this difference can be reduced with the help of collaboration as proposed by Sosibo (2014) through the involvement of the trainees in self-evaluation on one hand, and the introduction of psychology in the general school curriculum along with popularizing experimentally easy and verifiable psychological knowledge on the other. In addition, for this desired goal the trainees of the present case study opined in favour of collaboration and interaction between the trainees and the supervisors along with the use of the concept attainment model. However, these opinions are subject to verification. It is expected, with this reduction of the difference the trainees can come out of the stage of the moratorium and arrive at the stage of achieving their identity earlier.

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8. REFERENCES

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